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SUBJECT Rustavi Airfield

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1. The airfield located east of the Rustavi (42°32' N/45°02' E), Georgian S.S.R., railroad station was bordered by a railroad line on the southwest and by a tank training area on the east. Two three-story apartment houses, 100 meters long, and a four-story factory building with a wind cone on its roof were at the southwestern edge of the field.
2. About seven biplanes used for parachute training were stationed at the field. The parachutists were quartered in the factory building. Conventional parachutes marked by red and blue stripes, others fitted with an auxiliary parachute, and parachutes with four carrying strips looking like a square piece of cloth were seen. The speed of descent of the latter type parachute was much greater than that of the other parachutes. It seemed as if each parachutist was trained for jumping with all the three types of parachute.
3. In the summer of 1949 about ten single-engine planes were stationed at the airfield located east of the railroad station. Twin-engine aircraft taking off from the field with cargo gliders in tow were also seen. Individual and group parachute jumps were made from twin-engine planes. The airfield personnel was quartered in tents.

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4. An old hangar, 25x80 meters, with a capacity of five biplanes, a so-called F Z O school consisting of two prefabricated buildings 20x200 meters each and similar to former German Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labor Service) huts; and a concrete aircraft parking site 100x200 meters were available at the field.
5. The F Z O school buildings, which had been constructed in 1945/1946, were occupied by about 250 men from April to September 1949. The students of the school, 16 to 17-year old apprentices, were being given pre-military training. According to some of the trainees, instruction at the school was given in two groups; one group of about 100 men was pilot and parachute trainees and flight mechanics wearing uniforms of various branches of service, while the other group consisted of about 150 Georgian objectors who were conscripted for 5 years for this type of work or another type. They dressed alike, had no military insignia, performed no military duties, but were under military command.
6. A parachute training area bordered on the northeast of the airfield. During the summer months up to 200 parachute jumps over this area were made daily from biplanes. The parachutes were of different colors. While about 25 biplanes were normally stationed at the field, this number increased to 60 to 70 during the summer. From time to time twin-engine planes arrived from an airfield located to the northeast and dropped three parachutists each, who were later trucked back to their home field.
7. Other P's said that there was a large and modern airfield beyond a ridge of hills about 4 km to the northeast of the field. This field, which was said to be heavily occupied, had concrete taxiways, large hangars and other buildings.
8. An assembly hall about 15x20 meters and a masonry building, about 15x50 meters, occupied by pilot students were located on the southern edge of the field, which bordered on a tank training area to the north.
9. Fifteen to 25 biplanes were stationed at the field, which allegedly was occupied by a civilian pilot school. The 40 to 50 student pilots, who were instructed by officers, wore uniforms and practiced take-offs and landings.
10. The field, about 2,000x3,000 meters, was located about 500 meters east of the concrete plant, 200 meters north of the nitrogen plant in progress of construction, and 500 meters north of the power plant. Apartment houses were being built approximately 500 meters north of the field. A hangar about 60 meters square, and a three-story building designated air force barracks by the Soviets, were located on its western edge. The barracks building was occupied by an estimated 200 to 250 men, most of them young soldiers.
11. About 15 biplanes and two commercial planes were stationed at the field, which was used mainly for the training of parachutists and for take-offs and landings. Individual parachute jumps from biplanes, and group jumps by up to ten men from four-engine aircraft which approached the field from the direction of Tiflis without landing at the field, were seen. The jumps were made only in good weather from altitudes of 600 to 1,000 meters. Most of the parachutists used double parachutes, of which the smaller one was blue and opened first while the second largest one, which was red, opened a short time later. The parachutists jumping from the four-engine craft from side doors used only one parachute which opened immediately after the soldiers had left the plane.

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12. AA gun emplacements in the southern part of the field were occupied by four guns of about 88 mm caliber. Firing at sleeves towed by four-engine aircraft was frequently practiced.
13. The airfield located just northeast of the railroad line had a small hangar and was occupied by 10 to 20 biplanes, which were used primarily for parachute training. Biplanes of the same type approaching from the direction of Tbilisi (Tiflis) dropped parachutists over the field daily. Most of the parachutists were women 17 to 30 years of age and wearing army uniforms. They were armed with submachine guns and hand grenades. After landing, the parachutists, who were apparently being trained for partisan fighting, occupied trenches from which they advanced toward the road and railroad line to the south. At least 100 parachutists jumped every day from an altitude of 250 to 500 meters.
14. During the summer months tank units cooperating with infantry and artillery units held exercises near the field at least once a week. From 50 to 100 aircraft of various types, mostly twin-engine bombers and single-engine fighters used to participate in these exercises.
15. The airfield east of Rustavi had a small hangar and two or three large buildings. Three or four biplanes which were used for the dropping of parachutists jumping with single and double parachutes from an altitude of 400 to 500 meters, were permanently stationed at the field. Air force soldiers wearing light blue collar patches, and civilians, including women, who were trucked to the airfield were continually seen at the field.

1 Annex: Location Sketch of the Rustavi Airfield.

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